



Environmental Health Considerations For Community Based Organizations Contracting with Public Schools to Provide Remote Learning Facilities

August 27, 2020

The COVID-19 public health emergency, and the resulting closure of public schools beginning in March 2020, continues to impact North Carolina school-age children and their families. While many public schools remain closed to in-person learning or are operating on staggered schedules for at least the beginning of the 2020 – 2021 school year, working families are seeking safe places for child care for their school-aged children during periods of remote learning.

Public schools have the option to provide a remote learning environment at the traditional school building for school-age children to receive care while attending remote/online learning programs during the school day. Additionally, public schools can choose to contract with community-based organizations (CBOs) to establish Remote Learning Facilities, as set out in [emergency rules](#) adopted by the NC Child Care Commission, effective on August 13, 2020.

Schools that contract with CBOs to establish Remote Learning Facilities are considered an extension of the public school and thus exempt from the definition of child care; however, the CBO is not subject to the same inspections as a public school. Therefore, such CBOs do not need to be inspected for compliance with 15A NCAC 18A .2400. To help ensure that these sites are safe, this guidance provides recommended sanitation standards for CBO locations in alignment with 15A NCAC 18A .2400. CBOs may contact local health departments for consultative visits on these sanitation standards. In addition, CBOs that provide food must obtain food from an approved source or, if preparing food, the CBO will need to obtain a permit under 15A NCAC 18A .2600.

When public schools contract with CBOs to establish Remote Learning Facilities, they should ensure the CBOs have taken into account the following environmental health considerations that are important to health and safety of children.

WATER SUPPLY:

- Water must come from approved public water supply, or a well that meets drinking water rules.
- If a well is present, the well must be properly constructed, the well house kept clean and free of storage.
- Water supply should not include any cross connections or backflow hazards.

SANITARY SEWAGE DISPOSAL:

- Wastewater must be discharged into a properly operating public sewage system, or a properly operating on-site septic system.

RESTROOM FACILITIES:

- Adequate properly operating toilets should be provided.
- Toilets, sinks, and counters should be kept clean and should be in good repair.

- Soap and paper towels should be available at all times for hand washing.

BUILDING CONDITION, GENERAL FACILITIES AND PREMISES

- Floors, walls, and ceilings in all areas should be kept clean and in good repair.
- Storage should be kept off the floor.
- All chairs, desks, furniture, curtains, and other items should be kept clean and in good repair.
- Facility should provide adequate ventilation in student areas.
- Walls and floors in restroom facilities should be made of non-absorbent material.
- Trash cans should be available, trash receptacles outdoors should be covered and should be emptied regularly.
- Chemicals, cleaning supplies, pesticides, and other toxic materials should be stored and handled according to manufacturer's instructions.

FOOD SUPPLY

- All food must come from an approved food source (either catered from a permitted restaurant, brought in packaged from a public school cafeteria, or prepackaged from a food manufacturing facility) or, if preparing food, the CBO will need to obtain a permit under 15A NCAC 18A .2600.
- Water and ice for beverages must come from approved water supply.